

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

JAZMINE IMAN ROBERTS,¹

Plaintiff,

-against-

MANHATTAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATES,

Defendant.

23-CV-7384 (LTS)

ORDER OF DISMISSAL

LAURA TAYLOR SWAIN, Chief United States District Judge:

Plaintiff, a New York resident who is appearing *pro se*, brings this action invoking the Court's federal question jurisdiction, 28 U.S.C. § 1331. She asserts that, on August 18, 2023, Defendant St. Joseph's Medical Center ("St. Joseph's"), in New York County, denied her healthcare. By order dated August 23, 2023, the Court granted Plaintiff's request to proceed *in forma pauperis* ("IFP"), that is, without prepayment of fees. For the reasons set forth in this order, the Court dismisses the action for lack of subject matter jurisdiction.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

The Court must dismiss an IFP complaint, or any portion of the complaint, that is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B); *see Livingston v. Adirondack Beverage Co.*, 141 F.3d 434, 437 (2d Cir. 1998). The Court must also

¹ Plaintiff names another individual as a plaintiff who may be a minor; she does not state any facts regarding this individual. When referring to the Plaintiff, the Court refers only to Jazmine Iman Roberts. In an abundance of caution, and assuming the other individual is a minor, the Court directed the Clerk of Court to include on the docket the second Plaintiff's initials, as required under Rule 5.2(a)(3) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, and to restrict electronic access to the complaint to the parties of the action.

dismiss a complaint when the Court lacks subject matter jurisdiction of the claims raised. *See* Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(h)(3).

While the law mandates dismissal on any of these grounds, the Court is obliged to construe *pro se* pleadings liberally, *Harris v. Mills*, 572 F.3d 66, 72 (2d Cir. 2009), and interpret them to raise the “strongest [claims] that they suggest,” *Triestman v. Fed. Bureau of Prisons*, 470 F.3d 471, 474 (2d Cir. 2006) (internal quotation marks and citations omitted) (emphasis in original). But the “special solicitude” in *pro se* cases, *id.* at 475 (citation omitted), has its limits – to state a claim, *pro se* pleadings still must comply with Rule 8 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, which requires a complaint to make a short and plain statement showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.

BACKGROUND

The following facts are drawn from the complaint.² On August 18, 2023, Plaintiff

went into St. Josephs medical center today. Registration checked me in and the compl[ai]nt was mental health Rx refill. For Lexapro 20 mg. I was psychologically abused. Told my medical records wasn't available from Mount Vernon Montefiore hospital and denied access to healthcare. Was asked for urine was told there is a bed prepared for me. Never rec[ei]ved the Lexapro 20 mg or the medical care.

(ECF 1, at 5.) Plaintiff seeks unspecified damages.

DISCUSSION

The subject matter jurisdiction of the federal district courts is limited and is set forth generally in 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1332. Under these statutes, federal jurisdiction is available only when a “federal question” is presented or when plaintiff and defendant are citizens of different states and the amount in controversy exceeds the sum or value of \$75,000. “[I]t is

² The Court quotes verbatim from the complaint. All spelling, grammar, and punctuation are as in the original, unless noted otherwise.

common ground that in our federal system of limited jurisdiction any party or the court *sua sponte*, at any stage of the proceedings, may raise the question of whether the court has subject matter jurisdiction.” *United Food & Com. Workers Union, Loc. 919, AFL-CIO v. CenterMark Prop. Meriden Square, Inc.*, 30 F.3d 298, 301 (2d Cir. 1994) (quoting *Manway Constr. Co., Inc. v. Hous. Auth. of the City of Hartford*, 711 F.2d 501, 503 (2d Cir. 1983)); *see* Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(h)(3) (“If the court determines at any time that it lacks subject-matter jurisdiction, the court must dismiss the action.”); *Ruhrgas AG v. Marathon Oil Co.*, 526 U.S. 574, 583 (1999) (“[S]ubject-matter delineations must be policed by the courts on their own initiative[.]”).

To support federal question jurisdiction, a plaintiff’s claims must arise “under the Constitution, laws, or treaties of the United States.” 28 U.S.C. § 1331. A case arises under federal law if the complaint “establishes either that federal law creates the cause of action or that the plaintiff’s right to relief necessarily depends on resolution of a substantial question of federal law.” *Bay Shore Union Free Sch. Dist. v. Kain*, 485 F.3d 730, 734-35 (2d Cir. 2007) (quoting *Empire Healthchoice Assur., Inc. v. McVeigh*, 547 U.S. 677, 690 (2006)). Mere invocation of federal jurisdiction, without any facts demonstrating a claim under federal law, does not create federal subject matter jurisdiction. *See Nowak v. Ironworkers Loc. 6 Pension Fund*, 81 F.3d 1182, 1188-89 (2d Cir. 1996). Here, Plaintiff invokes the Court’s federal question jurisdiction but does not allege facts suggesting that St. Joseph’s violated any federal law. Rather, the facts alleged suggest state law claims of medical malpractice. The Court cannot exercise federal question jurisdiction of any state law claim Plaintiff may be asserting.

Plaintiff also does not allege facts demonstrating that the Court has diversity jurisdiction of this action, which would permit the Court to adjudicate state law claims. To establish jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1332, a plaintiff must first allege that the plaintiff and the

defendant are citizens of different states. *Wis. Dep’t of Corr. v. Schacht*, 524 U.S. 381, 388 (1998) (“A case falls within the federal district court’s ‘original’ diversity ‘jurisdiction’ only if diversity of citizenship among the parties is complete, *i.e.*, only if there is no plaintiff and no defendant who are citizens of the same State.”).

For diversity purposes, an individual is a citizen of the State where he or she is domiciled, which is defined as the place where a person “has his [or her] true fixed home . . . and to which, whenever he [or she] is absent, he [or she] has the intention of returning.” *Palazzo ex rel. Delmage v. Corio*, 232 F.3d 38, 42 (2d Cir. 2000) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). An individual “has but one domicile.” *Id.* A corporation is a citizen “of every State and foreign state by which it has been incorporated and of the State or foreign state where it has its principal place of business,” § 1332(c)(1), and a limited liability company (“LLC”), a limited partnership (“LLP”), or other unincorporated entity possesses the citizenship of each of its members, *Americold Realty Tr. v. Conagra Foods, Inc.*, 577 U.S. 378, 383 (2016). *See also Hertz Corp. v. Friend*, 559 U.S. 77, 92-93 (2010) (a corporation’s principal place of business is its “nerve center,” usually its main headquarters); *Bayerische Landesbank v. Aladdin Cap. Mgmt. LLC*, 692 F.3d 42, 49 (2d Cir. 2012) (A limited liability company (LLC) “takes the citizenship of each of its members” for diversity purposes.).

In addition, for a court to exercise diversity jurisdiction, the plaintiff must allege to a “reasonable probability” that the claim is in excess of the sum or value of \$75,000.00, the statutory jurisdictional amount. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1332(a); *Colavito v. N.Y. Organ Donor Network, Inc.*, 438 F.3d 214, 221 (2d Cir. 2006) (citation and internal quotation marks omitted).

Both Plaintiff and Defendant reside in New York, which precludes complete diversity of citizenship. Accordingly, the Court cannot exercise diversity jurisdiction of any state law claim

Plaintiff may be asserting. Because the Court also cannot exercise federal jurisdiction of this claim, the Court lacks subject matter jurisdiction of the action.

LEAVE TO AMEND DENIED

District courts generally grant a *pro se* plaintiff an opportunity to amend a complaint to cure its defects, but leave to amend is not required where it would be futile. *See Hill v. Curcione*, 657 F.3d 116, 123–24 (2d Cir. 2011); *Salahuddin v. Cuomo*, 861 F.2d 40, 42 (2d Cir. 1988). Because the defects in Plaintiff’s complaint cannot be cured with an amendment, the Court declines to grant Plaintiff leave to amend her complaint.

CONCLUSION

Plaintiff’s complaint, filed IFP under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(1), is dismissed for lack of subject matter jurisdiction. *See* Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(h)(3). This dismissal is without prejudice to Plaintiff’s pursuit of her claims in a court that has subject matter jurisdiction of them.³

The Court certifies under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3) that any appeal from this order would not be taken in good faith, and therefore *in forma pauperis* status is denied for the purpose of an appeal. *See Coppedge v. United States*, 369 U.S. 438, 444-45 (1962).

The Court directs the Clerk of Court to enter judgment.

SO ORDERED.

Dated: November 27, 2023
New York, New York

/s/ Laura Taylor Swain
LAURA TAYLOR SWAIN
Chief United States District Judge

³ The Court offers no opinion as to the viability of any claim Plaintiff may pursue in state court.